

BOWLIN

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Transplanted Yankee learns of ancestors' Civil War

By Carl McIntire
Special to The Clarion-Ledger

In what must be considered the rarest of coincidences, a young Clinton man has just discovered that, while his family has always been Yankees and he himself was raised "up North," his great-great-grandfather and a number of great-great-uncles were all right here a long time ago.

As members of the 58th and 114th Regiments of Ohio Volunteer Infantry, the ancestors of Mike Allard were with Gen. U.S. Grant's Union forces during the entire Vicksburg campaign, the 58th having survived Shiloh and Corinth.

While the 58th and 114th (in which Allard's great-great-grandfather Robert Bowlin served) took huge losses in the various campaigns, only two of the several men related to Allard died in the war, and these were from illnesses.

All this takes more interest to Allard because he recently came into possession of letters written by these men during the war and is using them to write term papers in a Civil War history class at Mississippi College.

Not interested in nor informed about the War Between the States as a youngster, he recalls that the toy soldiers he played with were painted blue and gray, but that did not mean anything to him.

Then, having moved to Clinton, he got interested in genealogy and started looking up data on his roots. He had known that his great-great-grandfather, Robert Bowlin, had served in the Union Army during the war because he had a picture of his grave that has an American flag

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beside the monument.

Then, an acquaintance just happened to send some papers she had collected as a part of her own genealogical research. They were of people with the same names, but not her relatives, so she felt they might belong to the Allards.

The papers were the War Department's file on Allard's great-great-granddad Bowlin. They told in which outfit he had served, and soon Allard learned all about Bowlin's long stay in the Vicksburg area.

From the official records of the Civil War, Allard has found numerous accounts of almost day by day activities of his great-great-granddad's unit, and found, also, that in the companion outfit were Bowlin's brother, David, a great-great-uncle, plus three other great-great-uncles who were brothers of another of his great-great-grandfathers. These fellows were Samuel, James and Amos Brown. Then there was John Martin Scholl, with the 17th Ohio, who was a younger brother of a great-great-great-grandfather, Mathias Scholl. He fought in the East.

The Civil War became a much more interesting study for Allard as he found all these records, and then an aunt came to visit and brought him 17 letters that his great-great-grandfather and some of those uncles had written, many of them from Mississippi.

On Feb. 3, 1863, from Youngs Point, La., Bowlin had written, in part:

"I will try to give you a little history of the war and our travels since we left Memphis, Tennessee. We left Memphis on the 20th of Dec. and come down to Vixburg and went into a fight and got a thrashing (this was the Battle of Chickasaw Bayou in which the 58th suffered 47 percent casualties) and left and went up the river up into Arkansas and there we had another fight but we did not get a thrashing we whipped them there and took about 7,000 prisoners and a lot of arms (this was the capture of Ft. Hindman at Post, Ark.) and several big guns and now we have come down to Vixburg again and I can't tell how this will come out but I hope that we will come out successfully but I tell you that it is going to be a hard fight for they are well fortified I have bin close enough to take a view of their breast works and their big guns planted in their forts I have seen the town it is a nice town but I have an idea that before three weeks that the town will be laid in ashes I was with the 58th for about 5 or 6 days and we went down below Vixburg about ten miles and helped to Capture a boat."

From the official records, it indicates that his letter referred first to the campaign when Grant tried, but failed, to bring in troops from the north via the Yazoo River. After that, the 58th was assigned to the Federal gunboats that were in the Mississippi and the forts to which he refers are probably those at Grand Gulf as well as the ones at Vicksburg.

In another letter, written from Vicksburg on July 18, 1863 — just 14 days after the surrender — Bowlin muses about home, the war and politics. His writing gives a clue to the thinking of the soldiers when they were not immediately engaged in hostilities:

"I had come pretty near to the conclusion that you had forgotten me but when I read your letter I found that you had not forgot me yet well father I have not forgotten you yet though many miles separate us this morning yet my mind finds its way back to my friends at home oft times when I lay down my bed at night I will lay and think about home and wander what they are at or wander if they are thinking of me well father I think by the way the thing is running now that war will soon come to a close Vicksburg and port Hudson hath fallen and we have old Johnston Surrounded at Jackson and Rosancrans is Chasing brag and they are giving Lee hark in the east so I think that this thing must close soon which I hope it will well father Some of the Butternuts have got me a Secesh up that way I tell you if I Live to get home and they call me a Secesh I would just as Searve Shoot them as a armed rebel down here for they are equally as bad if not worse than the rebs down here if it was not for them pups in the northern Sympathizers this is what I mean this war would have bin over Long ago well father what do you think about old Valandigham being nominated for governor of Ohio well I think this much about it if I was in the State and he was elected I would think the Soon-er I would get out of it the better well

father I hope that you feel y above voting for him I hope ti will not come to Like Som news come that your father w an old traitor for you cant i how my feeling was hurt whe that you and mother was n gether true blue well father paid of again today we a camped on the bank of the i vixburg we have left warrent Robert Bowlin was born i and married Cathanne Al 1862. Five months later he en After the war they raised 12 c on their farm near Bremen, O Of the other ancestors of M lard who were with Robert I in the war, all but two ret

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father I hope that you feel yourself above voting for him I hope the news will not come to Like Some other news come that your father voted for an old traitor for you cant imagine how my feeling was hurt when I read that you and mother was not altogether true blue well father we get paid of again today we are now camped on the bank of the river at vixburg we have left warrenton."

Robert Bowlin was born in 1839 and married Cathanne Allen in 1862. Five months later he enlisted. After the war they raised 12 children on their farm near Bremen, Ohio.

Of the other ancestors of Mike Al-lard who were with Robert Bowlin in the war, all but two returned

home to live out their lives. Robert's older brother, David Bowlin, died in December of 1862 of an illness while in service, and Samuel Brown died of typhoid fever near Memphis before the war's end.

The 58th and 114th Ohio, which have markers in the Vicksburg National Military Park, took part in many campaigns and battles. The 58th was at Fort Donelson, Shiloh, Corinth, Milliken's Bend, Chickasaw Bayou, Arkansas Post, Deer Creek, Steele's Bayou, Grand Gulf, Big Black, Vicksburg, Lake Providence, Fort Morgan, Ala., and the 114th joined them at Chickasaw Bayou and continued to the end.

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